

God Works Through His Servants, Part I

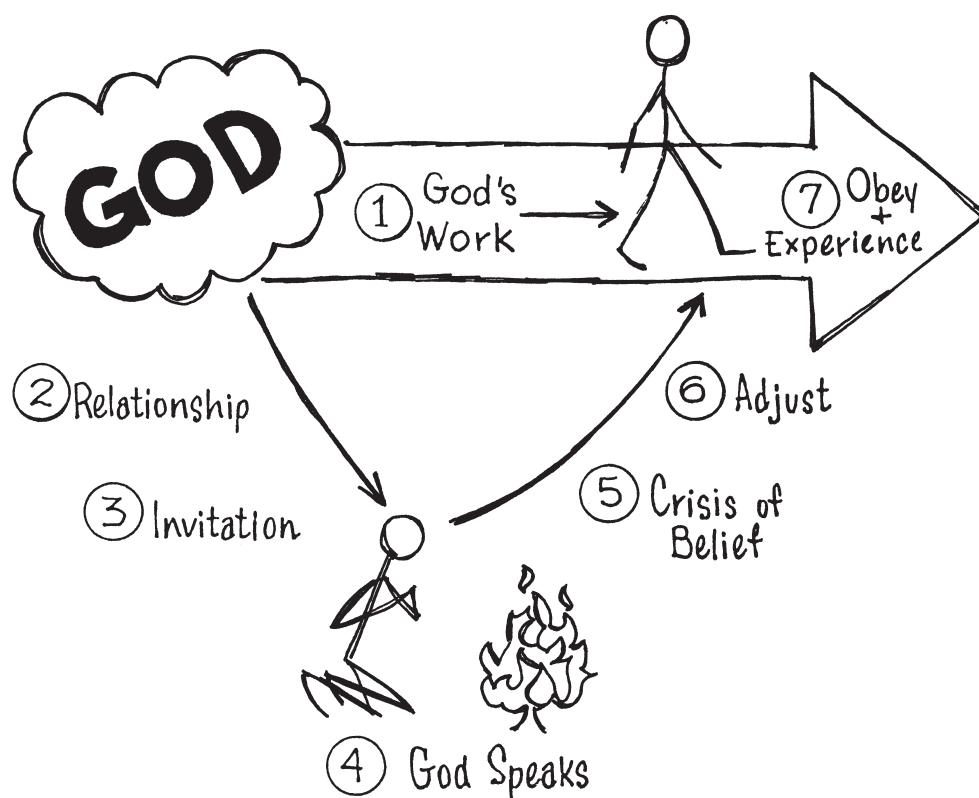
DAY 4

We often act as though God tells us what He wants us to do and then sends us off by ourselves to try and do it. Then anytime we need Him, we can call on Him, and He comes to help us. That is not the biblical picture. When God is about to do something, He reveals it to His people. He wants to accomplish His work through His people or His servant.

When God is about to do something through you, He has to get you from where you are to where He is, so He tells you what He is doing. (Later, I will help you understand how you can clearly know when God is speaking to you.) When you know what God is doing, then you know what you need to do: you need to join Him. The moment you know God is doing something where you are, your life and its activity will be thrown in contrast to God and His activity. You cannot stay the way you are and go with God.

Seven Realities of Experiencing God

The illustration below (and inside the back cover) summarizes the way you should respond to God's initiative in your life. The text of the realities is in the margin.



YOU CANNOT STAY THE WAY YOU ARE AND GO WITH GOD.

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him, and He accomplishes His work through you.

1 Complete the following to begin learning the seven realities. Use the text of the realities in the margin on page 21.

a. Underline key words or phrases that help you recall the seven realities.

b. Write the key words or phrases on the following lines. _____

c. Slowly read each reality. Write in the margin questions about any of the realities you do not fully understand.

d. Using only the words or phrases you recorded, see if you can mentally summarize all seven realities. Review before moving to the next question.

e. On a separate sheet of paper, try writing each of the seven realities from memory. They do not have to be word for word, but they should cover the important information. Start with your key words or phrases if that helps.

Most of this course will focus on one or more of these realities to help you understand them more completely. You may notice that I frequently repeat different aspects of this cycle. I use the repetition in different situations to help you learn how you can respond to God's activity in your life.

In the assignment above, you could have selected various words or phrases. Yours may be different, but I chose *God/work, love relationship, involved with Him, God speaks, crisis of belief, adjustments, obey*. You may have asked questions like these:

- What is involved in a love relationship with God?
- How can I know when God is speaking?
- How do I know where God is at work?
- What kinds of adjustments does God require me to make?
- What is the difference between adjustment and obedience?

As I've worked with people in many settings, I've been asked questions like these. I will answer as many questions as possible during the remaining units of this course. Richard and I will address other issues in the DVD messages that accompany this course.

We can identify three similarities in the lives of Bible characters through whom God worked:

1. When God spoke, they knew it was God.
2. They knew what God was saying.
3. They knew what they were to do in response.

Wouldn't you like for your walk with God to be such that He worked through you that way? He wants to move you into that kind of relationship. I trust this course will help you grow in your understanding of God.

Moses' call and ministry are good examples of the way God worked with people in the Bible. Exodus 2–4 describes his early life and call to ministry. Other passages of Scripture also help us see how Moses came to know and follow God's will. Using the seven realities, let's look at Moses' call and response. (You may want to read Ex. 2–4 first.)

Reality 1. God was already at work around Moses.

“The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them” (Ex. 2:23-25).

Reality 2. God pursued a continuing love relationship with Moses that was real and personal. God took the initiative to come to Moses and initiate a love relationship with him at the burning bush. God told Moses He would go with him into Egypt. Many texts throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy illustrate the way God pursued a continuing love relationship with Moses. Here is one example:

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction.’ When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights” (Ex. 24:12,15-16,18).

Reality 3. God invited Moses to become involved with Him in His work.

“I have come down to rescue them [the Israelites] from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt” (Ex. 3:8,10).

2 Answer the following questions about the three preceding statements.

- a. Reality 1: What was God already doing for Israel? _____

- b. Reality 2: What evidence demonstrates God wanted a real and personal relationship with Moses? _____
- c. Reality 3: How did God want to involve Moses in the work He was already doing? _____

(1) God had a purpose He was accomplishing in Moses’ world. Even though Moses was an exile in the desert, he was on God’s schedule, in the fullness of God’s timing, in the middle of God’s will. When God was about to deliver the children of Israel, the important factor was not God’s will for Moses. The critical truth was God’s will for Israel. (2) God’s purpose was to deliver the children of Israel. Moses was the one through whom God wanted to work to accomplish His purposes. (3) Time and again God invited Moses to talk with Him and to be with Him. God initiated and maintained a growing relationship with Moses. This relationship was based on love, and God daily fulfilled His purposes through His friend Moses. (For other examples of the love relationship, see Ex. 33:7-34:10; Num. 12:6-8.)

Whenever God prepares to do something, He reveals to a person or His people what He is going to do (see **Amos 3:7**). God accomplishes His work through His

Amos 3:7

“Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.”

people. This is the way God will work with you. The Bible is designed to help you understand God's ways. Then when God starts to act in that manner in your life, you will recognize that it is He who is working.

This is a two-part lesson, so we will continue with statement 4 tomorrow. This two-part lesson will be summarized at the end of day 5.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?

DAY
5

God Works Through His Servants, Part 2

GOD REVEALS WHAT HE IS ABOUT TO DO. THAT REVELATION BECOMES AN INVITATION TO JOIN HIM.

Yesterday you studied the first three realities of God's working with Moses. Now look at the last four.

Reality 4. God spoke to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.

"There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. ... God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.'

"The LORD said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land' " (Ex. 3:2-8).

"When a prophet of the LORD is among you,
I reveal myself to him in visions,
I speak to him in dreams.
But this is not true of my servant Moses;
he is faithful in all my house.
With him I speak face to face" (Num. 12:6-8).

Reality 5. God's invitation for Moses to work with Him led to a crisis of belief that required faith and action. Moses expressed a crisis of belief when he made the following statements to God.

“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

“What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you’ ”?

“O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”

“O Lord, please send someone else to do it” (Ex. 3:11,13; 4:1,10,13).

Reality 6. Moses had to make major adjustments in his life to join God in what He was doing. Moses' crisis called for faith and action.

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. . . . By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned” (Heb. 11:24-29).

“The LORD had said to Moses in Midian, ‘Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.’ So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt” (Ex. 4:19-20).

Reality 7. Moses came to know God by experience as he obeyed God, and God accomplished His work through Moses. Many texts throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy illustrate how God revealed His nature and His purposes to Moses. As Moses obeyed God, God accomplished through Moses what Moses could not do in his own strength. Here is one example in which Moses and the people came to know God as their Deliverer.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army. . . .’

“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chari-

ots and horsemen.’ Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place.

“But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant” (Ex. 14:15-17,21-23,26-27,29-31).

1 Answer the following questions about the last four realities.

a. Reality 4: What did God reveal about Himself, His purposes, and His ways?

b. Reality 5: What did Moses have trouble believing about God? _____

c. Reality 5: How would you summarize Moses’ faith as it is described in Hebrews 11? _____

d. Reality 6: What adjustments did Moses have to make? _____

e. Reality 7: How do you think Moses felt when God delivered the Israelites through him? _____

God reveals what He is about to do. That revelation becomes an invitation to join Him. (4) God talked to Moses about His will. God wanted Moses to go to Egypt to be His instrument to deliver the Israelites from their bondage. God revealed to Moses His holiness, His mercy, His power, His name, and His purpose to keep His promise to Abraham and to give Israel the promised land. (5) Moses offered many objections. He questioned whether God could do such a great work through someone like him (see Ex. 3:11), whether the Israelites would believe God had appeared to him (see Ex. 4:1), and whether he was capable of speaking eloquently enough to accomplish the task (see Ex. 4:10). In each case Moses was really doubting God more than himself. Moses faced a crisis of belief: is God really able to do what He says? (5) Moses’ faith is described in Hebrews, however, as a model of self-sacrifice and trust in almighty God. Once God let Moses know what He was about to do, that revelation became Moses’ invitation to join Him. (6) Moses made the necessary adjustments to orient his life to God. Moses had to come to the place where he believed God could do everything He said He would do. Then he had to leave his job and in-laws and move to Egypt. After making these adjustments, he was in a position to obey God. That did not mean he was going to do something all by himself for God. It meant he was going to be where God was working so God would do what He had purposed to do in the first place. Moses was a servant who was *moldable*, and he *remained* at God’s disposal to be used as God chose. God accomplished His purposes through him. When God does a God-sized work through your life, you will be humbled before Him. (7) Moses must have felt unworthy to be used in such a significant way. Moses obeyed and did everything God told him. Then God accomplished through Moses all He intended. Every step of obedience brought Moses (and Israel) to a greater knowledge of God (see Ex. 6:1-8).

What Can One Ordinary Person Do?

A wonderful Scripture that has helped me at this point is “Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (Jas. 5:17-18). Elijah was an ordinary man just like us. He prayed, and God responded powerfully.

When God healed the crippled beggar through Peter, **Peter and John** were called before the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish court in the land) to give an account of their actions. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter boldly spoke to the religious leaders. Notice the leaders’ response: “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, *ordinary men*, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13, emphasis added).

The people you generally see in the Scriptures were ordinary. Their relationships with God and the activity of God made them extraordinary. Did you notice this statement: the leaders recognized Peter and John “had been with Jesus”? Anyone who takes the time to enter an intimate relationship with God can see Him do extraordinary things through his or her life.

Dwight L. Moody was a poorly educated, unordained shoe salesman who felt God’s call to preach the gospel. Early one morning he and some friends gathered for prayer, confession, and consecration. They heard Henry Varley say, “The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.”

Moody was deeply moved by those words. Later he listened to the great preacher Charles H. Spurgeon. Moody thought:

“The world had yet to see! with and for and through and in! A man!”
Varley meant *any* man! Varley didn’t say he had to be educated, or brilliant, or anything else! Just a *man*! Well, by the Holy Spirit in him, he’d [Moody] be *one* of those men. And then suddenly, in that high gallery, he saw something he’d never realized before,—it was not Mr. Spurgeon, after all, who was doing that work: it was God. And if God could use Mr. Spurgeon, why should He not use the rest of us, and why should we not all just lay ourselves at the Master’s feet, and say to Him, “Send me! use me!”

Dwight L. Moody was an ordinary person who sought to be fully and wholly consecrated to Christ. One ordinary Christian in the hand of almighty God can do *anything* God commands. Through this one common life God began to do the extraordinary. Moody became one of the greatest evangelists of modern times. He preached in revival services across Britain and America, where thousands and thousands came to Christ.

2 Could God work in extraordinary ways through your life to accomplish significant things for His kingdom? Yes No

You might say, “I’m not a D. L. Moody.” You don’t have to be. God doesn’t want you to be a D. L. Moody. God wants you to be you and to let Him do through you whatever He chooses. When you believe nothing significant can happen through you, you have said more about your belief in God than you have declared about yourself. You have said that God is incapable of doing anything significant through you. The truth is, He



“The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.”



When you believe nothing significant can happen through you, you have said more about your belief in God than you have declared about yourself.

is able to do anything He pleases with one ordinary person who is fully consecrated to Him. Would you be willing to make yourself available to Him? Do it!

God's Standards Are Different from Ours

Don't be surprised that God's standards of excellence are different than the world's. How long was the public ministry of **John the Baptist**? Perhaps six months. What was Jesus' estimate of John's life? Jesus said, "I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John" (Luke 7:28). None greater! John had six months wholly yielded to God, and the Son of God declared that his contribution to the kingdom of God was unsurpassed.

Don't measure your life by the world's standards. Many denominations are doing it. Many pastors and churches are doing it. Think about it. By the world's standards, a person or a church may look pretty good yet, in God's sight, be utterly detestable. Similarly, a person or a church may be wholly yielded to God and pleasing to Him yet be insignificant in the world's eyes. Could a pastor who faithfully serves where God placed him in a small, rural community be pleasing to the Lord? Certainly, if that is where God placed him. God will look for and reward faithfulness, whether the person has been given responsibility for little or much.

God delights in using ordinary people to accomplish His purposes. Paul said God deliberately seeks the weak things and the despised things because from them He receives the greatest glory (see 1 Cor. 1:26-31). Then everyone knows only God could have done something through them. If you feel weak, limited, or ordinary, you are the best material through which God works.

- 3 Review your Scripture-memory verse and be prepared to recite it to a partner in your small-group session this week.**
- 4 Spend a few minutes in prayer for your small group. Pray that the Lord will have complete freedom to mold and shape and guide each one to be perfectly in the middle of His will.**

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

God reveals what He is about to do.

The revelation becomes an invitation to join Him.

I can't stay where I am and go with God.

God is able to do anything He pleases with one ordinary person who is fully consecrated to Him.

God's standards of excellence are different from ours.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?

This is the end of this unit's lessons. The following page will be used in your small-group session this week. It includes notes from the DVD messages and a review of the content you have studied this week.